

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 05450 152158Z
ACTION OES-02

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 5450

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI FROM BOMBAY APRIL 13, 1977
REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION

QUOTE
BOMBAY 0863

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: TECH IN
SUBJ: PRESIDENT CARTER'S NUCLEAR POLICY MESSAGE

1. WHEN I SAW IAEC CHAIRMAN HOM N SETHNA ON OTHER BUSINESS THIS MORNING, APRIL 13TH, HE REMARKED THAT HE HAD TO GO TO DELHI THIS AFTERNOON TO DISCUSS, ALONG WITH REVISIONS IN HIS BUDGET, THE GOI REACTION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S NUCLEAR POLICY MESSAGE. SETHNA SAID THE PRIME MINISTER HAD TELEPHONED HIM TO ASK ABOUT "THE UNFAVORABLE REFERENCES TO INDIA" IN THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE. SETHNA SAID THAT THE ERRONEOUS STATEMENT THAT INDIA HAD GOTTEN PLUTONIUM FOR ITS EXPLOSION FROM A POWER REACTOR HAD PARTICULARLY DISTURBED MORARJI.

2. SETHNA WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE WOULD BE NO "OFF THE CUFF" COMMENTS FROM INDIAN OFFICIALS ON THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH BECAUSE THE GOI WANTS TO CONSIDER ITS REACTION VERY CAREFULLY IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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LIGHT OF ITS INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS AREA. WHEN I ASKED FOR HIS PRIVATE VIEWS, HE SIMPLY REPLIED THAT HE THOUGH HE HAD LOTS OF COMPANY ALL AROUND THE WORLD AS WELL AS IN INDIA IS FINDING THE MESSAGE DISAPPOINTING. HE SAID THAT THERE ARE FOUR MAIN FACTIONS IN THE GOI, WHICH HE REFUSED TO IDENTIFY, THAT ADVOCATE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO NUCLEAR MATTERS. THREE OF THE FOUR, HE SAID, WERE REALLY QUITE ANGRY ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S

SPEECH BECAUSE IN THEIR VIEW IT FAILS TO DO JUSTICE TO INDIA'S RECORD, DOESN'T TAKE SUFFICIENT ACCOUNT OF THE NEEDS OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, AND CONTINUES A LAMANTABLE TENDENCY BY THE UNITED STATES TO APPLY DOUBLE STANDARDS IN ITS NUCLEAR POLICY. SETHNA BELIEVES THAT ANY GOI PUBLIC STATEMENT WILL BE MODERATE BUT HE THOUGHT I SHOULD KNOW THAT FEELINGS RUN DEEP.

3. SETHNA AVOIDED A DIRECT REPLY TO MY QUERY AS TO WHETHER DR RAJA RAMANNA'S STATEMENTS IN TEHRAN INDICATING DOUBT ABOUT THE WISDOM OF LONG-TERM STORAGE OF SPENT FUEL WITHOUT REPROCESSING REFLECT THE GOI'S VIEWS. HE NOTED ONLY THAT THE IAEC MIGHT HAVE TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THIS ISSUE IN A VERY PRACTICAL WAY QUITE SOON. HE SAID THAT HE NOW HAS PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF HIS STUDY OF THE LOAD-BEARING CAPACITY OF THE STORAGE POOLS AT THE TARAPUR REACTORS AND THAT THESE RESULTS ARE MORE FAVORABLE THAN HE HAD EXPECTED. IT NOW APPEARS THAT THESE POOLS COULD TAKE A SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER LOAD, ONE THAT MIGHT CREATE ENOUGH SPACE TO FULLY UNLOAD ONE OF HIS REACTOR CORES. HE VERY MUCH WANTS TO OPEN THE CORES FOR A FULL EXAMINATION OF WHAT HE CALLED THE SPARGEL (PHONETIC) PROBLEM WHICH HE SAYS HAS ARISEN IN SIMILAR REACTORS IN BOTH SWEDEN AND THE UNITED STATES. HE CLAIMS THAT THE CORES HAVE TO BE EMPTIED SO THAT ONE CAN DETERMINE WHETHER THERE IS A REAL SAFETY PROBLEM. HE, OF COURSE, ALSO WANTS TO HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF EMPTYING COMPLETELY ONE OF THE CORES SO THAT HE CAN CONVERT FROM 6 X 6 TO 7 X 7 CONFIGURATION WHICH WOULD GIVE HIM MUCH BETTER PERFORMANCE IN FUEL UTILIZATION.

4. SETHNA CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT WHEN HE GOES TO DELHI HE INTENDS TO URGE THAT THE GOI COOPERATE FULLY IN EXAMINING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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RERACKING OPTION FOR THE TARAPUR REACTORS. HE BELIEVES INDIA SHOULD GO ALONG WITH THIS SOLUTION IF IT PROVES TO BE SAFE AND DOES NOT COST TOO MUCH. HE NOTED THAT THERE WILL BE DIFFERING VIEWS, PARTICULARLY AS IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE FRG WILL BE SELLING BRAZIL A REPROCESSING PLANT. SOME PEOPLE WILL ASK WHY INDIA SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO USE ITS OWN REPROCESSING PLANT WHICH HAS A PROVEN CAPABILITY IN THE LIGHT OF THE GERMAN SALE. HE CLOSED ON AN OPTIMISTIC NOTE, SAYING THAT HE WOULD BE TALKING WITH ME AGAIN IN A FEW DAYS NOW THAT WASHINGTON IS ACTIVELY TRYING TO HELP RESOLVE THE TARAPUR SPENT FUEL STORAGE PROBLEM. SIGNED COURTNEY UNQUOTE SCHNEIDER

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NNN

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